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'Oh yes, our sister company in Abidjan has sent a young African to train in a large brewery in France.'

'What is your labour like?'

'Not so good. They don't seem to have much interest in their work.'

I remembered my discussion with Babacar Saye, Mayor of St. Louis, who told me that though he was a Socialist, he believed that at the present time capitalism had an essential role in the country. 'If we are to improve the conditions of the proletariat capitalism is a necessity, but this improvement cannot be speeded up except to the extent that the profit from capital is used towards the satisfying of the indispensable needs of the workers. Therefore it is necessary that the worker feels that he is complementary to the capitalist—it is up to the capitalist to make him understand this.'

To me this seems one of the most important factors in the industrialization of West Africa. The African from the tribal background is essentially an individual with a distinct position in his tribal group or village. Though he appreciates the money he earns in industry, psychologically he does not like being treated as a mere cog in a machine, losing his identity. If he could be given some indication that he is as indispensable to the firm as the manager, he would work hard. As Mr. C. O. Van der Plas, the United Nations Official in the Gambia, once observed: 'It is curious that the African running his own little enterprise works literally like a black, and takes on enormous responsibilities.' Yet if he is taken on as a cog in a vast machine, he becomes slack and Europeans call him the most inefficient and expensive labour in the world. It seems to me that a lot depends on the relations between the worker and the managerial staff.

Two years before I had visited a large shoe factory in neighbouring Rufisque with Mr. David Pearson, the British Consul responsible for liaison between British and French territories in West Africa. The factory was sited on the outskirts of the town opposite a huge cement works which belched forth pastel smoke at an angry sky. We entered a courtyard where hides of every colour were lying in the sun to dry. A Czech employee of the firm, which has its origins in Czechoslovakia, met us and led us into a gloomy shed where flabby hides, a hideous grey green in

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S 295 882 colour, flopped on the floor like lumps of spittle. Others, like them, were being cured in evil vats or stripped in heavy mangles. I examined one of the skins stretched out on the floor. The Czech pointed to three large holes in its surface.

'They are not good, these skins. Very stiff. They come from the North Senegal and the Fula herdsmen will not learn that the cow must be looked after if you want to make good shoes from it. They are only good for cheap shoes. We have to get the better models from our European factories.'

We emerged from the foetid gloom of the curing section into the dyeing room, full of sheets of leather, which an African was busy spraying scarlet, yellow, grey or blue. Another was trimming the coloured hides before they were sent to dry.

S 295 [463] We followed our guide into a long hall, which reverberated to the rat-ti-tat of a hundred sewing machines, manned exclusively by Africans.

'Are most of your employees Africans?' I asked.

'On this work, yes. But not in the executive. And on some of the more skilled jobs we have to have Europeans.'

'Are they good workers?'

'Very good, though they cannot tackle the more difficult jobs. I believe they are better farther down the Coast. But we have nothing to complain about.'

And from the rate those shoes were coming off the production line, I was sure they hadn't.

'How many shoes do you produce a year?'

'About 300,000. Most of them are sandals,' he said, pointing to some scarlet slippers which an African was packing into boxes.

'These we also produce in great quantities.'

S W [291] He showed me a pink, green and sky blue slipper with a large plastic pompom where the big toe would be. These were wildly popular with the fashion-mad Jollof women at the time. Bata's are very much at the mercy of their whims, though they have the consolation that supply rarely exceeds demand.

S [294] [565] As I watched one African youth deftly turning a leather sandal on a stitching machine, I could not help thinking of the old Mandinka leather-worker in Dakar's market, laboriously sewing tough slippers as his father had done before him and as he was bound to do by virtue of his caste. Once he exercised a monopoly